

Abstract

A number of geographically dispersed automated product design systems and support systems are connected to a network. A user of a design system requesting assistance in using the design system is connected to an operator of one of the support systems. A display and control connection is established between the user system and the support system such that the operator of the support system can monitor and control the user system. A discussion connection is established between the user of the user system and the operator of the support system such that the user can submit inquiries to and receive responses from the operator while the operator is viewing the information being displayed to the user at the user system.